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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, who teaches us obedience, show us the right path that we may glorify Your wonderful Name. In times of distress, restore our strength and make us more than victorious because of Your great love, wisdom, and power.

Today, keep our lawmakers true and sincere as they strive to please You in all they think, say, and do.

Inspire them to claim Your great and precious promises. May they embrace Your promise in the 84th Psalm, verse 11, which says, You will not withhold any good thing from those who walk with integrity.

Continue to sustain our Senators with Your faithfulness.

We pray in Your precious Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Douglas R. Bush, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Army.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, before I get into my remarks, just some brief housekeeping.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR EN BLOC

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, as if in legislative session, I understand that there are three bills at the desk due for a second reading en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The leader is correct.

The clerk will read the bills by title for the second time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 3600) to improve the cybersecurity of the Federal Government, and for other purposes.

A bill (H.R. 3076) to provide stability to and enhance the services of the United States Postal Service, and for other purposes.

A bill (H.R. 6617) making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2022, and for other purposes.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, in order to place the bills on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I would object to further proceedings en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bills will be placed on the calendar.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, those are all bills that we hope to move forward, and so that is why I have rule XIV'd them.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

POSTAL REFORM

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, yesterday, by a margin—a large margin—of 342 to 92, Congress took the first steps toward creating the most important upgrade to our post office in decades by passing a bipartisan reform package that has been years in the making.

With an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote in the House, it is my intention for the Senate to quickly take up and pass this bipartisan, bicameral Postal reform bill. We hope to take action here on the floor and pass the bill before we go to the Presidents Day recess.

The post office is, quite simply, one of the most important institutions of American life. Every day, tens of millions of Americans, veterans, small businesses, people living in rural communities, seniors rely on the Postal Service for their medicines and prescriptions, for getting essential goods, for voting, for correspondence, for their livelihoods, and to get close to one another on special occasions like birthdays and anniversaries and things like that.

But, nevertheless, our Postal Service has needed reform for over a decade. Its budgets are severely strained, its delivery services are overwhelmed, and the

• This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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disruptions unleashed by the internet have made it harder for it to meet its obligations to the American people and to its own employees.

Every one of us has heard objections about letters arriving far too late. In many instances, whether they be checks that people depend on for their livelihoods or prescription drugs or whatever, these complaints are growing and growing and growing.

The bipartisan Postal reform bill offers a much needed reset. It will guarantee delivery services continue 6 days a week; it will put the post office on a path back towards solvency; and it will ensure that we take care of our dedicated Postal workers while also saving the post office over \$50 billion.

Let me summarize again. If this legislation is passed, it would ensure continued 6-day delivery service, make deliveries more efficient and timely, and will put the post office on a path to stability.

I want to recognize my colleagues who have made it possible for this legislation to move forward. First, I thank my friend and colleague Senator PETERS, chairman of the Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee, for his leadership in bringing this bill together.

I also want to thank Ranking Member PORTMAN for working across the aisle on this commonsense reform bill.

And I want to thank all my House colleagues who worked assiduously for a long, long time pushing for postal reform. Both the chair and the ranking member of the relevant committees supported the bill on the floor of the House yesterday.

I have always said Democrats will work on a bipartisan basis whenever we can pass commonsense legislation that will improve the lives of the American people.

Last year, bipartisan cooperation helped clear the way for such things as the historic Anti-Asian Hate Crimes bill, a much needed competition bill, and our bipartisan infrastructure package.

This work period alone, we have already made great progress on bipartisan priorities, like ending forced arbitration for sexual harassment and assault. As I have mentioned, we will soon act on the post office.

And I expect both sides will support passage of the short-term CR that will keep the Federal Government open before next week's deadline.

I want to thank the appropriators from both sides of the aisle for working in good faith, and I am optimistic that soon they will arrive at an agreement for an omnibus package, which is far more preferable to the alternative of a yearlong CR.

We are getting very, very close to coming to an agreement on top-line numbers, and as I said, I am more optimistic than I have been in a very long time that we will get an omnibus bill done for government spending for the rest of the year.

So all these priorities—forced arbitration, Postal reform, and government funding—are bipartisan items that I expect the Senate will act on before the recess.

As I have always said from my first day as majority leader, we will work in a bipartisan way whenever we can. We did it in our first year with things like the Anti-Asian hate crimes legislation, the competition bill, and the bipartisan infrastructure package. And these 2 weeks now represent a productive continuation of that commitment.

So on this issue, I am optimistic that very soon we will see the first major reform of America's Postal system in decades. It will be a win for our dedicated Postal workers and for the American people who rely on the post office every single day.

FORCED ARBITRATION

Mr. President, on forced arbitration, before the end of the week, it is my intention to have the Senate take action on one of the most important workplace reforms that we have seen in decades—eliminating forced arbitration for sexual harassment and assault.

Yesterday, I sat down with my Republican colleagues, Senators LINDSEY GRAHAM and JONI ERNST, and we worked out an agreement on a few outstanding issues that will clear the path for the Senate, we believe, to hold a vote very soon on this issue. I want to thank them for their good faith and cooperation. And I especially want to thank my friend and colleague from New York, Senator GILLIBRAND, for being the leader on this important issue for so, so long.

For decades, it has been common practice for employers to tuck arbitration clauses into the fine print of employment contracts. Today, these clauses effectively function as preconditions for getting hired to a new job. Most workers may not even realize what they have signed on to until it is too late, after the fact.

Today, we can no longer ignore that forced arbitration has proven immensely harmful when it comes to sexual harassment and sexual assault. When workers—almost always women—face abuse or harassment at the hands of their employers, forced arbitration immediately limits their options for remedy. The deck is stacked against them from the start, and thus abusers rarely face true accountability. That is awful and must change.

And all of it is going to change very soon. By passing bipartisan legislation to end forced arbitration for sexual harassment and assault, we will ensure that those who face abuse will have the freedom to exercise their basic right to pursue action against harmful employers in court. This is long, long overdue, and I want to commend both sides for working together to getting us close to the finish line. I expect we will hold a vote on this to pass this legislation in the very near future, and the benefits of the legislation will be felt across the country and last for a very, very long time.

Bottom line, ending forced arbitration for sexual harassment and assault is about making our workplaces safer, holding abusive employers accountable, and making sure that every American can exercise their right to seek justice in a court of law.

SENATE BUSINESS

Mr. President, finally, on Senate business, concerning the activity on the floor today, the Senate is going to have another busy workday as we continue confirming Presidential nominations to the administration and onto the Federal bench.

Today, three rollcall votes are scheduled on the nominations of both the head of the U.S. International Development Finance Corp and the President's pick for Assistant Secretary of the Army.

But tonight we are very likely to add additional rollcall votes to complete the confirmation of several pending nominations. These votes will likely take us into the early evening, but they are necessary in order to confirm nominees.

I will add that until this past year, these nominees almost always have been approved through unanimous consent. Unfortunately, a few people on the other side are holding it up and making us vote on each of these, but vote we must.

Once again, though, to move things along, I ask my colleagues to cast their votes quickly tonight, to remain in their seats or near the floor as much as possible, and to be flexible in order to help move things along as quickly as possible on the Senate floor, as we did last week.

We did a good job voting efficiently last week despite the large number of votes. So I ask everyone to continue at that pace tonight as needed.

STOCK TRADING

Mr. President, finally, off the floor, I want to reiterate a brief point I made yesterday regarding stock trading and Members of Congress. I believe this is an important issue that Congress should address, and it is something that has clearly raised interest from both sides of the aisle over the past few weeks.

As I said yesterday, there are a number of Senators with various proposals, and I have asked my Democratic colleagues to come together and come up with a single bill this Chamber can work on. I hope we can pass something. I want to encourage my colleagues on the Democratic side to reach out across the aisle. Some of the proposals—we have a whole bunch—have bipartisan support.

This is something the Senate should address. Hopefully, we can act on it soon, and hopefully it can be done in a bipartisan way, like many of the bills we are looking at this week.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.